

## The Voice: I'm Graduating! What's Next?

*By Dr. Francisca Beer & Marina Kamel*

*I'm Graduating! What's Next?* Was the topic of an event Dr. Francisca Beer organized alongside her team in the Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration (JHBC) Office of Academic Equity (OAE). On February 24th, 2023 the office hosted its Fifth Annual Voice event, a conversation with African American Men. With over 45 attendees and participants, the event was well-received by California State University of San Bernardino's (CSUSB) faculty, students, staff, as well as, alumni and community members. The same topic was discussed last academic year. Participants ask to continue the conversation.

Dean Tomas Gomez-Arias who the JHBC college has officially appointed in July of 2022 welcomed participants. After encouraging words from the dean, Dr. Francisca Beer, a Finance Professor, an Associate Dean, and Director of the JHBC Office of Academic Equity at CSUSB made a short presentation comparing unemployment rates between African American men versus others.

Dr. Beer's research shows that education skills, and work experience played a large part in these rates. Marriage and health were other reasons explaining the lower employment rates. Regrettably, discrimination as well as, social and spatial isolation continue to play an important part. In the spirit that we "learn from each other", Dr. Beer ended her presentation by introducing this year's speakers.

Our speaker, Robert Watkins emphasized the benefits of planning ahead and stressed the importance of always being ready to learn. While King Adjei-Frimpong, an employee of the Texas Education Agency, encouraged students to "redefine themselves". Professional success implies being willing to take risks and to step outside of one comfort zone. Duane Cofield, Business Owner and Marketing Adjunct Professor highlighted the benefits of networking and seeking help. Networking is great for sharing ideas and knowledge. It leads to opportunities and can help increase confidence. Meanwhile, Frederick Jones who works for San Bernardino Valley College joined the conversation and talked about "branding"; a personal brand means standing out of the crowd. By branding themselves adequately, students will be able to highlight their personal experiences and their skills. When branding is done correctly it provides a competitive advantage.

Another speaker who joined us at the event was Babatunde Olanipekun, a Certified Life Transformation Coach at Beyond Epic, who reminded participants that time management is critical to achieve goals. Effective time management helps avoid being swamped and helps prioritize. And Rev. Barry Settle, Senior Pastor of Ward African Methodist Episcopal Church

joined us on that Friday evening and mentioned that life's not fair. He explained that to better handle unfairness, students should trust the process and sometimes change their perspective.

Closing the 5th Annual Voice with African American Men is Dr. Annika Anderson, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology. She stated, “there are still ways to move forward and that is by tapping into your networks and that is by using the resources that you have available”.

The JHBC Office of Academic Equity is looking forward to holding more events like this in the near future and invites everyone to participate and attend.